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Readings Booklet

June 1997



English 30

Part B: Reading

Grade 12 Diploma Examination

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June 1997
English 30 Part B: Reading
Readings Booklet
Grade 12 Diploma Examination

Description

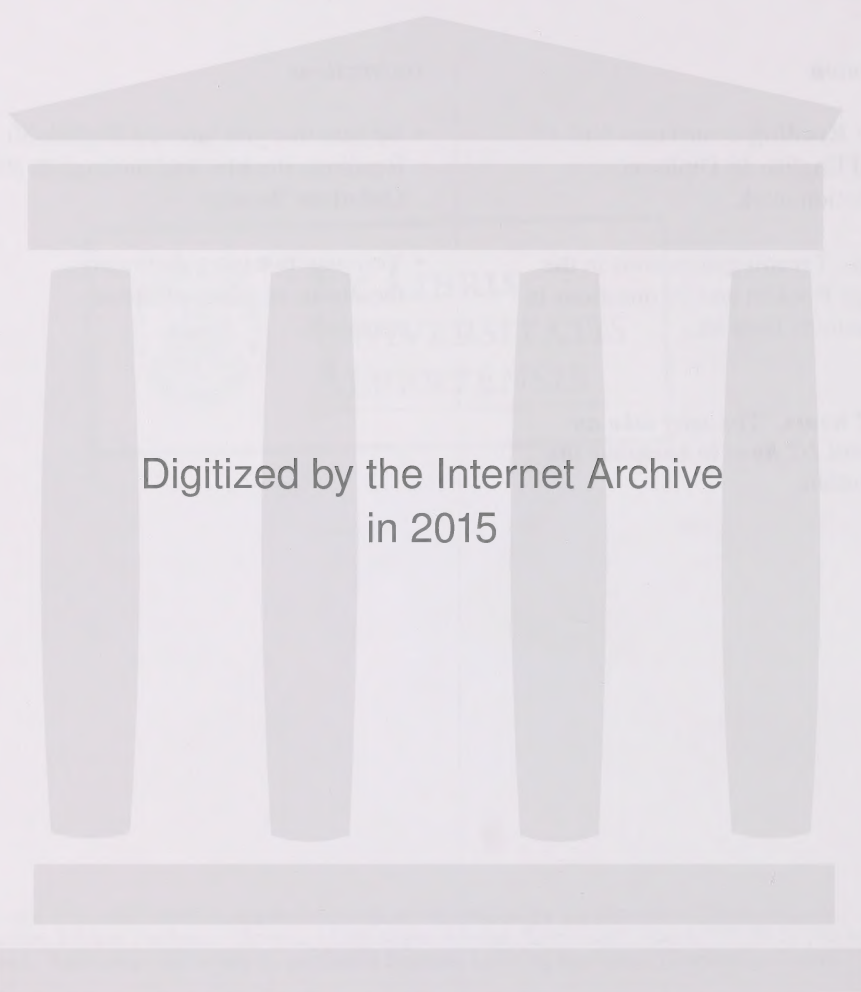
Part B: Reading contributes 50% of the total English 30 Diploma Examination mark.

There are 7 reading selections in the Readings Booklet and 70 questions in the Questions Booklet.

Time: 2 hours. You may take an additional 1/2 hour to complete the examination.

Instructions

- Be sure that you have an English 30 Readings Booklet **and** an English 30 Questions Booklet.
- You may **not** use a dictionary, thesaurus, or other reference materials.



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I. Questions 1 to 10 in your Questions Booklet are based on this essay, published in October, 1989.

METAPHORS OF THE WORLD, UNITE!

Forty-eight intellectuals from around the world recently assembled to help celebrate the sesquicentennial¹ of Boston University by trying to find a metaphor for the age in which we live. It was an elegant game, but also inadvertently right for an age of television and drugs, in which the world is reduced to a sound bite or a capsule, a quick fix of meaning.

“Postmodern Age” has always been an empty description, and “Postindustrial Age” was a phrase about as interesting as a suburban tract. They are not metaphors anyway, but little black flags of aftermath. An age that is “post”-anything is, by definition, confused and dangerously overextended, like Wile E. Coyote after he has left the cartoon plane of solid rock and freezes in thin air, then tries to tiptoe back along a line of space before gravity notices and takes him down to a little *poof!* in the canyon far below.

The metaphysics of the possibilities can flare and darken. The Holocaust and other catastrophes of the 20th century invite the term post-apocalyptic.² But a world veering toward the 21st century sometimes has an edgy intuition that it is “pre-apocalyptic.” Last summer Francis Fukuyama, a State Department planner, resolved the matter peacefully. He published an article proclaiming the “end of history,” a result of the worldwide triumph of Western liberal democracy. Hence this is the posthistoric age, a fourth dimension in which the human pageant terminates in a fuzz of meaningless well-being. Intellectuals sometimes nurture a spectacular narcissism about the significance of the age they grace.

Is there one brilliant, compact image that captures the era of Gorbachev and the greenhouse effect, of global communications and AIDS, of mass famine and corporate imperialisms, of space exploration and the world’s seas awash in plastic? The Age of Leisure and the Age of the Refugee coexist with the Age of Clones and the Age of the Deal. Time is fractured in the contemporaneous. We inhabit not one age but many ages simultaneously, from the Bronze to the Space. Did the Ayatullah Khomeini³ live in the same millennium as, say, Los Angeles?

The era’s label should be at least binary, like Dickens’ “the best of times, the worst of times,” again no metaphor. It is a fallacy to think there is one theme. Like all ages, it is a time of angels and moping dogs—after Ralph Waldo

Continued

¹sesquicentennial—celebration of the anniversary of an event that occurred 150 years earlier

²apocalyptic—relating to either a grand or a catastrophic, violent event

³the Ayatullah Khomeini—political and religious leader of Iran from 1979 until his death in 1989, who wanted to return the country to its traditional values

Emerson's lines: "It seems as if heaven had sent its insane angels into our world as to an asylum, and here they will break out in their native music and utter at intervals the words they have heard in heaven; then the mad fit returns and they mope and wallow like dogs."

In Boston, Historian Hugh Thomas (Lord Thomas of Swynnerton) said the world now is a "tessellated pavement without cement." He was quoting something Edmund Burke said about Charles Townshend, a brilliant but erratic 18th century British statesman. Not bad, but somewhat mandarin.⁴ The audience had to remember, or look up, tessellation, which is a mosaic of small pieces of marble, glass or tile. This age, thinks Lord Thomas, is a mosaic of fragments, with nothing to hold them together. Is it an age of brilliant incoherence? Yes. It is also an age of incoherent stupidity.

One might put the mosaic in motion by thinking of this as the age of the hand-held TV channel changer. The electronic worldmind (and such a thing is coming into being, a global mass conformed by what passes through its billion eyes into the collective brain) has a short attention span and dreams brief dreams. When history vaporizes itself this way—its events streaming off instantly into electrons fired into space and then recombining mysteriously in human living rooms and minds around the world—then people face a surreal pluralism of realities. The small world that the astronauts showed us from space is also, down here, a psychotically tessellated overload of images. The planet reaches for the channel changer, a restless mind-altering instrument. Like drugs, it turns human consciousness into a landscape that is passive, agitated and insatiable—a fatal configuration.

Historians can speak of the Enlightenment or the Baroque Era or La Belle Epoque and not fear that they are describing developments in only a fraction of the world. Now the metaphor must be global. There is no figure of speech so powerful or acrobatic that it can cover such a drama, the world that looks like the product of a shattered mind, without some immense event (an invasion by aliens perhaps) that overrides all else. Michael Harrington once called this the Accidental Century. Intellectuals sometimes ignore the role of inadvertence. "The fecundity⁵ of the unexpected," Proudhon said, "far exceeds the statesman's prudence." If scientists ever perform the alchemy of cold fusion,⁶ the age will have a name, and the future of the world will be immeasurably altered.

Continued

⁴mandarin—pedantic, bookish, high-brow

⁵fecundity—fertility, capacity

⁶cold fusion—a purported means of producing nuclear reactions at low temperatures; experiments in cold fusion have been discredited

Metaphors for the age tend to be emotional and subjective, as poetry is. Perspective, passion and experience choose the words. Betty Friedan, saturated with the history of feminism's Long March and where it began, speaks of amazing freedom, as if that were the song of the past 20 years. Others are haunted by the obliteration of artistic form, of moral values and all traditional stabilities. Some know that by now humankind has exhausted its capacity to surprise itself in the doing of evil.

Language takes its life from life, and gives it back to life as myth, as metaphor, something that has a counterlife of its own. In a world of blindingly accelerating change, language can no longer fashion its metaphors fast enough to stabilize people with a spiritual counterlife, and so self-knowledge may deteriorate to a moral blur, like the snow of electrons on a television screen. In some sense the world is plunging on without benefit of metaphor, a dangerous loss. The eyes do not have time to adjust to either the light or the dark.

Lance Morrow
American Journalist

II. Questions 11 to 17 in your Questions Booklet are based on this poem.

WHAT IS A JUDGE?

- What is a judge? A judge is a seated torso and head sworn before God never to sell justice nor play favorites while he umpires the disputes brought before him.
- 5 When you take the cigar out of your face and the fedora¹ off your head in the presence of the court, you do it because it is required from those who are supposed to know they have come into a room where burns the white light of that priceless abstraction named justice.
- 10 What is a judge? The perfect judge is austere, impersonal, impartial, marking the line of right or wrong by a hairs-breadth.
- Before him, bow humbly, bow low, be a pilgrim, light a candle.
- 15 For he is a rara avis, a rare bird, a white blackbird, a snow-white crow.
- What is a judge? A featherless human biped having bowels, glands, bladders, and intricate blood vessels of the brain, One more frail mortal, one more candle a sudden change of wind might blow out as any common candle blows out in
- 20 a wind change
- So that never again does he sit in his black robes of solemn import before a crowded courtroom saying two-years ten-years twenty-years life for you or “hanged by the neck till you are dead dead dead.”
- 25 What is a judge?
He is a man.
- Yes, after all, and no matter what,
and beyond all procedures and investitures,
a judge is nothing more nor less than a man—
- 30 one man having his one-man path, his one-man circle and orbit among other men
each of whom is one man.

Continued

¹fedora—hat

Therefore should any judge open his mouth
and speak as though his words have an
35 added light and weight beyond the speech
of one man?

Of what is he the mouthpiece when he speaks?
Of any ideas or passions other than those gath-
ered and met in the mesh of his own per-
40 sonality? Can his words be measured forth
in so special a realm of exact justice in-
structed by tradition, that they do not re-
late to the living transitory blood of his
vitals and brain, the blood so soon to cool
45 in evidence of his mortal kinship with all
other men?

Carl Sandburg
American Poet (1878–1967)

III. Questions 18 to 29 in your Questions Booklet are based on this excerpt from a play.

from CATHLEEN NI HOULIHAN

The setting is Ireland in the late 1700s. The Irish have been repressed by the British for centuries, and the French, traditional enemies of the British, are seen by the Irish as attractive potential allies.

CHARACTERS:

PETER GILLANE—the father

BRIDGET GILLANE—the mother

MICHAEL GILLANE—their son, about to be married

THE POOR OLD WOMAN—legendary personification of Ireland

DELIA CAHEL—engaged to Michael

PATRICK GILLANE—a lad of twelve, Michael's brother

NEIGHBOURS

In the preceding scene, the family has been anticipating MICHAEL'S wedding to DELIA, showing more interest in the dowry money than in the girl herself. MICHAEL, however, exhibits a less mercenary attitude toward the wedding. In his words, "fortune only lasts for a while, but the woman will be there always."

In the distance is heard the sound of townspeople cheering, and stories are circulating of a strange woman walking the countryside.

MICHAEL: They're not done cheering yet. *(He goes over to the door and stands there for a moment, putting up his hand to shade his eyes.)*

BRIDGET: Do you see anything?

MICHAEL: I see an old woman coming up the path.

5 **BRIDGET:** Who is it, I wonder? It must be the strange woman Patrick saw a while ago.

MICHAEL: I don't think it's one of the neighbours anyway, but she has her cloak over her face.

10 **BRIDGET:** It might be some poor woman heard we were making ready for the wedding and came to look for her share.

PETER: I may as well put the money out of sight. There is no use leaving it out for every stranger to look at. *(He goes over to a large box in the corner, opens it and puts the bag in and fumbles at the lock.)*

Continued

15 **MICHAEL:** There she is, father! (*An OLD WOMAN passes the window slowly. She looks at MICHAEL as she passes.*) I'd sooner a stranger not to come to the house the night before my wedding.

BRIDGET: Open the door, Michael; don't keep the poor woman waiting. (*The OLD WOMAN comes in. MICHAEL stands aside to make way for her.*)

OLD WOMAN: God save all here!

20 **PETER:** God save you kindly!

OLD WOMAN: You have good shelter here.

PETER: You are welcome to whatever shelter we have.

BRIDGET: Sit down there by the fire and welcome.

OLD WOMAN (*warming her hands*): There is a hard wind outside. (*MICHAEL watches her curiously from the door. PETER comes over to the table.*)

25 **PETER:** Have you travelled far to-day?

OLD WOMAN: I have travelled far, very far; there are few have travelled so far as myself, and there's many a one that doesn't make me welcome. There was one that had strong sons I thought were friends of mine, but they were shearing their sheep, and they wouldn't listen to me.

30 **PETER:** It's a pity indeed for any person to have no place of their own.

OLD WOMAN: That's true for you indeed, and it's long I'm on the roads since I first went wandering.

BRIDGET: It is a wonder you are not worn out with so much wandering.

35 **OLD WOMAN:** Sometimes my feet are tired and my hands are quiet, but there is no quiet in my heart. When the people see me quiet, they think old age has come on me and that all the stir has gone out of me. But when the trouble is on me I must be talking to my friends.

BRIDGET: What was it put you wandering?

40 **OLD WOMAN:** Too many strangers in the house.

BRIDGET: Indeed you look as if you'd had your share of trouble.

OLD WOMAN: I have had trouble indeed.

BRIDGET: What was it put the trouble on you?

OLD WOMAN: My land that was taken from me.

45 **PETER:** Was it much land they took from you?

OLD WOMAN: My four beautiful green fields.

PETER (*aside to BRIDGET*): Do you think could she be the widow Casey that was put out of her holding at Kilglass a while ago?

BRIDGET: She is not. I saw the widow Casey one time at the market in Ballina, a stout fresh woman.

50 **PETER** (*to OLD WOMAN*): Did you hear a noise of cheering, and you coming up the hill?

Continued

OLD WOMAN: I thought I heard the noise I used to hear when my friends came to visit me. (*She begins singing half to herself.*)

55 I will go cry with the woman,
 For yellow-haired Donough is dead,
 With a hempen rope for a neck-cloth,
 And a white cloth on his head, —

MICHAEL (*coming from the door*): What is it that you are singing, ma'am?

60 **OLD WOMAN:** Singing I am about a man I knew one time, yellow-haired
 Donough that was hanged in Galway. (*She goes on singing, much louder.*)
 I am come to cry with you, woman,
 My hair is unwound and unbound;
 I remember him ploughing his field,
 65 Turning up the red side of the ground,
 And building his barn on the hill
 With the good mortared stone;
 O! we'd have pulled down the gallows
 Had it happened in Enniscrone!

70 **MICHAEL:** What was it brought him to his death?

OLD WOMAN: He died for love of me: many a man has died for love of me.

PETER (*aside to BRIDGET*): Her trouble has put her wits astray.

MICHAEL: Is it long since that song was made? Is it long since he got his death?

OLD WOMAN: Not long, not long. But there were others that died for love of me
 75 a long time ago.

MICHAEL: Were they neighbours of your own, ma'am?

OLD WOMAN: Come here beside me and I'll tell you about them. (*MICHAEL sits down beside her on the hearth.*) There was a red man of the O'Donnells from the north, and a man of the O'Sullivans from the south, and there was one
 80 Brian that lost his life at Clontarf by the sea, and there were a great many in the west, some that died hundreds of years ago, and there are some that will die to-morrow.

MICHAEL: Is it in the west that men will die to-morrow?

OLD WOMAN: Come nearer, nearer to me.

85 **BRIDGET:** Is she right, do you think? Or is she a woman from beyond the world?

PETER: She doesn't know well what she's talking about, with the want and the trouble she has gone through.

BRIDGET: The poor thing, we should treat her well.

PETER: Give her a drink of milk and a bit of the oaten cake.

90 **BRIDGET:** Maybe we should give her something along with that, to bring her on her way. A few pence or a shilling itself, and we with so much money in the house.

PETER: Indeed I'd not begrudge it to her if we had it to spare, but if we go

Continued

95 running through what we have, we'll soon have to break the hundred pounds,
and that would be a pity.

BRIDGET: Shame on you, Peter. Give her the shilling and your blessing with it,
or our own luck will go from us. (*PETER goes to the box and takes out a
shilling.*)

BRIDGET (*to the OLD WOMAN*): Will you have a drink of milk, ma'am?

100 **OLD WOMAN:** It is not food or drink that I want.

PETER (*offering the shilling*): Here is something for you.

OLD WOMAN: This is not what I want. It is not silver I want.

PETER: What is it you would be asking for?

OLD WOMAN: If anyone would give me help he must give me himself, he must
105 give me all. (*PETER goes over to the table staring at the shilling in his hand
in a bewildered way, and stands whispering to BRIDGET.*)

MICHAEL: Have you no one to care for you in your age, ma'am?

OLD WOMAN: I have not. With all the lovers that brought me their love I never
set out the bed for any.

110 **MICHAEL:** Are you lonely going the roads, ma'am?

OLD WOMAN: I have my thoughts and I have my hopes.

MICHAEL: What hopes have you to hold to?

OLD WOMAN: The hope of getting my beautiful fields back again; the hope of
putting the strangers out of my house.

115 **MICHAEL:** What way will you do that, ma'am?

OLD WOMAN: I have good friends that will help me. They are gathering to help
me now. I am not afraid. If they are put down to-day they will get the upper
hand to-morrow. (*She gets up.*) I must be going to meet my friends. They
are coming to help me and I must be there to welcome them. I must call the
120 neighbours together to welcome them.

MICHAEL: I will go with you.

BRIDGET: It is not her friends you have to go and welcome, Michael; it is the girl
coming into the house you have to welcome. You have plenty to do; it is
food and drink you have to bring to the house. The woman that is coming
125 home is not coming with empty hands; you would not have an empty house
before her. (*to the OLD WOMAN.*) Maybe you don't know, ma'am, that my
son is going to be married to-morrow.

OLD WOMAN: It is not a man going to his marriage that I look to for help.

PETER (*to BRIDGET*): Who is she, do you think, at all?

130 **BRIDGET:** You did not tell us your name yet, ma'am.

OLD WOMAN: Some call me the Poor Old Woman, and there are some that call
me Cathleen, the daughter of Houlihan.

Continued

PETER: I think I knew some one of that name, once. Who was it, I wonder? It must have been some one I knew when I was a boy. No, no; I remember, I
135 heard it in a song.

OLD WOMAN (*who is standing in the doorway*): They are wondering that there were songs made for me; there have been many songs made for me. I heard one on the wind this morning. (*Sings.*)

140 Do not make a great keening
When the graves have been dug to-morrow.
Do not call the white-scarfed riders
To the burying that shall be to-morrow.
Do not spread food to call strangers
To the wakes that shall be to-morrow;
145 Do not give money for prayers
For the dead that shall die to-morrow. . . .

They will have no need of prayers, they will have no need of prayers.

MICHAEL: I do not know what that song means, but tell me something I can do for you.

150 **PETER:** Come over to me, Michael.

MICHAEL: Hush, father, listen to her.

OLD WOMAN: It is a hard service they take that help me. Many that are red-cheeked now will be pale-cheeked; many that have been free to walk the hills and the bogs and the rushes will be sent to walk hard streets in far countries;
155 many a good plan will be broken; many that have gathered money will not stay to spend it; many a child will be born and there will be no father at its christening to give it a name. They that have red cheeks will have pale cheeks for my sake, and for all that, they will think they are well paid. (*She goes out, her voice is heard outside singing.*)

160 They shall be remembered for ever,
They shall be alive for ever,
They shall be speaking for ever,
The people shall hear them for ever.

BRIDGET (*to PETER*): Look at him, Peter; he has the look of a man that has got the touch. (*raising her voice*) Look here, Michael, at the wedding clothes. Such grand clothes as these are! You have a right to fit them on now; it would be a pity to-morrow if they did not fit. The boys would be laughing at you. Take them, Michael, and go into the room and fit them on. (*She puts them on his arm.*)

170 **MICHAEL:** What wedding are you talking of? What clothes will I be wearing to-morrow?

BRIDGET: These are the clothes you are going to wear when you marry Delia Cahel to-morrow.

Continued

175 **MICHAEL:** I had forgotten that. (*He looks at the clothes and turns towards the inner room, but stops at the sound of cheering outside.*)

PETER: There is the shouting come to our own door. What is it has happened? (*NEIGHBOURS come crowding in, PATRICK and DELIA with them.*)

PATRICK: There are ships in the Bay; the French are landing at Killala! (*PETER takes his pipe from his mouth and his hat off, and stands up. The clothes slip*
180 *from MICHAEL'S arm.*)

DELIA: Michael! (*He takes no notice.*) Michael! (*He turns towards her.*) Why do you look at me like a stranger? (*She drops his arm. BRIDGET goes over towards her.*)

PATRICK: The boys are all hurrying down the hillside to join the French.

185 **DELIA:** Michael won't be going to join the French.

BRIDGET (*to PETER*): Tell him not to go, Peter.

PETER: It's no use. He doesn't hear a word we're saying.

BRIDGET: Try and coax him over to the fire.

DELIA: Michael, Michael! You won't leave me! You won't join the French, and
190 *we going to be married! (She puts her arms about him, he turns towards her as if about to yield. OLD WOMAN'S voice outside.)*

They shall be speaking for ever,
The people shall hear them for ever.

(*MICHAEL breaks away from DELIA, stands for a second at the door, then*
195 *rushes out, following the OLD WOMAN'S voice. BRIDGET takes DELIA, who is crying silently, into her arms.*)

PETER (*to PATRICK, laying a hand on his arm*): Did you see an old woman going down the path?

PATRICK: I did not, but I saw a young girl, and she had the walk of a queen.

William Butler Yeats
Irish poet and dramatist (1865– 1939)

IV. Questions 30 to 41 in your Questions Booklet are based on this excerpt from an essay.

from ONE OF US

In a well-regulated universe, great revelations would be heralded by a sign—a star in the East perhaps, or an angel with flaming sword. But to me they have often come unsung. Who, knowing Moishe Bloch, would have supposed him to be the agent of epiphany?¹

5 It was 1941, my third year at the University of Manitoba. Although the war too was then in its third year I had, by some marvel of obtuseness, remained largely unaware. The war was not my business. My business was study, pursued with single-minded passion. It would be nice to say that I was driven by pure devotion to learning—nice, but not true. My parents had come from Russia with
10 no money, little schooling, and a great hope for the future. Here, in the new world, the children would thrive. What did it matter if the *Mama* and *Tata* worked hard in a country store? Everything was for the children—the breast of chicken, the softest shoe leather, the finest education. First in class, at school and then at the university, we would enter the promised land. I never inquired what
15 one did there. And so I studied to win scholarships, won scholarships so I might continue to study, and asked no questions as the wheel went round. . . .

By the end of 1941, a sense of the war had reached even the most disengaged scholars. France had fallen; Germany was driving forward in the Balkans and in North Africa. Uniforms were everywhere. Some boys had left the university and
20 joined up; those with unsatisfactory grades had been forced to leave. I was riding the streetcar to school one day, at the beginning of the examination period, when I saw Moishe Bloch edging his way towards me. I hunched into my book, prepared to freeze him out. Moishe was one of those pathetic hangers-on who is propelled through an institution of higher learning by no desire of his own, only
25 by the absolute determination of his parents. Weak, soft, easygoing, he would have been happy, I think, to be a pants presser, as his father had been before luck and some canny investments placed him at the head of the Bloch Garment Factory. Moishe had scrabbled through two years of university work with the help of tutors and summer sessions; still carrying “supps”—supplementals—from
30 the previous term, he was not likely to last much longer. Now he breathed strongly in my ear, his foolish face thrust close to mine. “Listen,” he said, “I got to talk to you.”

I couldn’t imagine why. “Excuse me.” I kept my eyes on the page. “I’m studying. I have an exam this afternoon.”

Continued

¹epiphany—an insightful grasp of reality through something simple and striking, such as an event

35 “Look, please, is important. The Army, it’s out to get me for sure. . . .” He made a small noise, something between a groan and a belch. I tried not to smile, imagining him snugly buttoned into an army tunic, shivering in the front line (did armies still fight in lines?) or parachuting down from a fighter plane, his great quivering buttocks looming over Tunis or Sidi Baran.² “Sorry,” I said crisply. “I don’t have any influence with the Army.”

40 “No, no, you don’t see. . . .” He really was unbelievably thick. “It’s my English. I have next week to make a paper on *Lord Jim*.³ No paper, I’m through, washed out, *kaput*. And my father—if I go overseas, it kills him, such a heart condition he has. Look, I know English is for you no trouble. Write me a paper. 45 Whatever you say, price no object.”

I can’t say I felt virtuous indignation. Mostly I was just annoyed. . . . “I don’t write papers for pay. Anyway, I’ve got four exams myself next week. I need every minute.” The streetcar had stopped outside the arts building. I pushed past him and headed for the exit. . . .

50 I thought about Moishe again on the way home. I was changing streetcars at Portage and the Mall, and Hudson’s Bay had an all-red window. There were red sweaters, red coats, and—dead centre—a brilliant red jersey dress that knocked your eye out. It was the kind of thing worn by Heather Sanderson, whose father donated some of the scholarships I slaved for. I imagined myself swinging down 55 the university corridors while heads turned. “Is that *Bruser*?” If I were the kind of person who wrote papers for money, I could have a dress like that.

I wasn’t really surprised when the phone rang that evening. “It’s a boy,” my landlady said, handing me the receiver. From the sound of the breathing, it must be a whole regiment of boys—a whole family, anyway. Bet they were *all* 60 gathered round. “Look,” Moishe began, “I’m sorry what I said this morning. I mean, I know you don’t do anything is not kosher.⁴ All I want is you should tutor me.”

“Tutor you? At this stage of the game?” I’d done a certain amount of tutoring during the term—seventy-five cents for a generously interpreted hour—but exam 65 time was different.

“Well . . . look at it like this. I have to write a paper on *Lord Jim*. So you tutor me in *Lord Jim*, and then I write the paper. Everything above board, yes? You name the price.”

70 I hesitated. It wasn’t the most above-board proposition I’d ever heard. On the one hand, it wasn’t exactly dishonest either. If I worked Moishe over for one

Continued

²Tunis or Sidi Baran—cities in the North African theatre of war

³*Lord Jim*—a novel by Joseph Conrad about a man who, as chief mate of a stricken ship, abandons the pilgrims who are his passengers in order to save his own life. The significance of this action is the crux of the novel.

⁴kosher—proper, appropriate

solid evening, I might really get him in shape to write his own paper. The red dress was ten dollars. I gathered up my nerve. "Would an evening's tutoring be worth ten dollars to you?"

Over the wires, Moishe leapt to embrace me. I could see the happy flush, the eager eye. "Perfect, perfect! You got yourself a deal. So when should I come?"

A new misgiving shook me. "You *have* read *Lord Jim*? Because if not, the deal's off."

The voice oozed and bubbled. "Sure, sure, how should I not read it? But it's a hard book, *you* know. Some things I could use a little help."

Next evening, Moishe sat across the table from me. He had brought his copy of the novel (very clean), a notebook, and a freshly sharpened pencil.

"Now, just to get started," I said briskly. "Suppose you tell me what you think *Lord Jim* is all about. What's the central theme of the book?"

He smiled happily. "Well, Conrad was attempting to illustrate in Jim's weakness and strength the mystery of human character and to reveal the hidden springs of human conduct. He shows . . ."

After the first sentence, with its manifestly un-Blochian cadence, I couldn't believe it. *Masterplots*. I'd have guessed anyway, but as it happened I'd taken a look at *Masterplots* that very day, to refresh my memory on details. The liar, the vermin, the unspeakable fraud. "You haven't read *Lord Jim*!" I shouted. "Not a line. You've memorized a crib!"⁵

Moishe looked hurt and sad. "I couldn't help it. Such a big book, and I read slow. But you help me now, and I read it this summer, I promise."

"I don't give a damn about your promises!" If I turned him out now, as he deserved, I lost the ten dollars *and* a precious evening of study time. I am in blood stepped in so far . . .⁶ "O.K." I made up my mind. "We're reading it *now*, together."

He paled. "The whole book? But I need by next week the *paper*. . . ."

"No, of course not the whole book! Just key passages. We'll look at the most important parts, and I'll fill in the rest. Here—" I opened my copy, with its precious underlinings and marginal scribbles. ("Cf. Hardy," "N.B. Conrad's theme of illusion," and so on.) "Start reading."

It was awful, far worse than I could possibly have imagined. "Dogged" in "dogged self-assertion" he pronounced as if it were connected with the canine world. He did not know the meaning of *aggressive* or *immaculate*, thought *humane* was synonymous with *human*. He did not even, it appeared, know what a parson⁷ was. ("Parson? Yeah, sure, I know. Parson, person—same thing.")

Continued

⁵memorized a crib—plagiarized an interpretation

⁶I am in blood stepped in so far . . .—a quotation from *Macbeth* regarding his degrees of guilt

⁷parson—rector or vicar of a church, especially a Protestant church

Irony escaped him entirely; no question of attempting illumination there. I drove him furiously through the opening account of the parsonage⁸ from which Jim had come. “Now, what is the point of this description?” I prompted. “Why do we need it?” Moishe beamed, anxious to please. “We don’t.” At nine o’clock I gave up.

“All right,” I announced tightly. “We can’t possibly get through the book this way. We’ll take another tack. You decide on a topic for your paper, and I’ll talk about *that*. And”—I tried to sound casual—“you can take notes.”

Rapturous, a spirit released from Hell, Moishe closed *Lord Jim* and consulted his notebook. “I have here a list . . .”

“ . . . The way I see it, there is here only one subject my speed. What *Lord Jim* Means to Me.”

Of course. A perfect duffer’s topic. The sort of thing no really good student would touch. I reached out for this soiled undergarment of a subject, anxious to cloak it with the familiar folds of critical drapery. “Conrad’s great novel strikes a familiar chord in the heart of every sensitive reader. Jim’s pathetic romanticism, coupled as it is with the fatal habit of thinking too precisely on the event . . .” I stopped. Moishe’s pencil had, after the first few words, stopped scratching. He looked sick. “Nah,” he said. “This ain’t me. It’s got to be—you know—what this story says to a plain schmo. Like what has *Lord Jim* got to do with Moishe Bloch?”

What indeed? Come to think of it, what did *Lord Jim* have to do with me? I had read the novel carefully, several times, underlining and annotating. I had committed to memory Stein’s great speech on men and butterflies—“A man that is born falls into a dream, like a man who falls into the sea. . . .” I had distinguished myself on the final exam. But the truth of the matter was that *Lord Jim* had never meant anything to me—except, perhaps, a test of mastery.

Moishe’s querulous⁹ interruption caught me, blinded, in a spotlight of cold brilliance. I felt myself rocking, a small, badly rigged ship, on an ocean of immense significance. A phrase from the novel echoed hollowly: “In the destructive element immerse . . .” I jumped.

“You see . . .” I began. What was he to see? What did *I* see? The waters moved. I was Lord Jim, deep in the hold of the doomed ship, holding my lantern to the bulging bulkhead. Any minute now the ocean would overwhelm me. “It’s like this. Jim is such a decent fellow, really. He wants to be good, and he thinks he *is* good. He’s one of us.” Moishe looked up questioningly. “I mean—well, *you* have certain ideas about what you want to do, or be—and I do—and we try to

Continued

⁸parsonage—parson’s home

⁹querulous—complaining, peevish

145 live up to those ideas.” Moishe nodded, frowning a little. I felt sudden
compassion, thinking how hard it must be for him to pursue his parents’ dream.
“So we move along like Jim, always getting ready for the big moment when we
can prove ourselves. And we feel secure, like Jim that night on the *Patna*, with
150 the big ship sliding over the quiet water, the charts all laid out so neatly, with the
compass and dividers and the straight pencil line marking the course. But all the
while danger’s coming. There’s black smoke pouring from the funnel, and the
wheel chains grind. Everything explodes all of a sudden—you know, like water at
the back door when you’re braced for fire at the front—and there’s not time to get
your hero suit on. You don’t think or anything” Moishe was watching,
155 round-eyed, now. “You just *jump*. And then you don’t ever understand what
happened. Did you jump because somebody told you to? Because, deep down,
you’re the jumping kind? Was it just bad luck that you found yourself on a sinking
ship, or did you, somehow, go out and *find* that ship, the way Jim found out the
Patna when he could have gone back to the home service?” I was talking faster
160 now, with a kind of thick excitement, and at the same time ashamed of my
excitement. Good Lord, *I* wasn’t on trial. I was just helping a fellow with a
paper. But the book had taken hold.

Moishe’s question came as from the depths of myself. “So what’s the
answer?”

165 “Don’t you see, there *isn’t* any answer, ever? We’re always in a mist— ‘at the
heart of a vast enigma,’ Conrad says. But every time we fail our dream, we
become less able to realize it next time. At the end, when Jim practically delivers
his friends to a crook, it’s because he has this crookedness in himself.”

Moishe sighed, a balloon slowly sputtering out. “I didn’t know it was such a
170 sad book.”

“Sad?” I was startled. “Well, I guess it is. If you care about being good, you
always find out you’re not good enough. And somehow, knowing that, you’ve got
to pull your torn coat about you and stand as straight as you can.”

I don’t remember saying good night to Moishe. He left the envelope with my
175 check in it, and word came by the grapevine that Bartlett was pleased with the
paper. I bought the red dress. But the first time I tried it on, the wool itched
terribly; another time, I stood turning in front of the mirror and it seemed that the
dress made me look fat. Months passed. I heard that Moishe Bloch had been
taken by the army, and felt a kind of mean relief. So I hadn’t done anything after
180 all. . . . Still the red dress hung at the back of the closet. At the end of the year, I
crumpled it up in a box of old clothes and gave it to the Salvation Army.

Fredelle Bruser Maynard
Canadian writer and TV host

V. Questions 42 to 51 in your Questions Booklet are based on this poem.

WING ROAD

Amazing how the young man who empties
Our dustbin¹ ascends the truck as it moves
Away from him; rises up like an angel
In a china-blue check shirt and lilac
5 Woollen cap, dirty work gloves, berry-red
Bandanna flapping his throat. He plants
One foot above the mudguard, locks his
Left hand to a steel bar stemming
From the dumper's loud mouth, and is borne
10 Away, light as a cat, right leg dangling,
The bright air snatching at that black-
Bearded face. He breaks to a smile, leans wide,
And takes the morning to his puffed chest,
His right arm stretched far out, a checkered
15 China-blue wing gliding between blurred earth
And heaven, a messenger under the locust trees
That stand in silent panic at his passage. But
His mission is not among the trees: he
Has flanked both sunlit rims of Wing Road
20 With empty dustbins, each lying on its side,
Its lid a fallen shield beside it, each
Letting the noonlight scour its emptiness
To shining. Carried off in a sudden cloud
Of diesel smoke, in a woeful crying out of
25 Brakes and gears, in a roaring of monstrous
Mechanical appetite, he has left this secret
Radiance straggled behind him where the crows,
Covening in branches, will flash and haggle.

Eamon Grennan
Irish American poet

¹dustbin—garbage can

VI. Questions 52 to 61 in your Questions Booklet are based on this excerpt from the final scenes of a play.

from KING RICHARD II, Act V, scenes v, vi

CHARACTERS:

RICHARD—recently deposed King of England

GROOM—a groom of Richard’s royal stables

KEEPER—prison attendant

EXTON—Sir Percy of Exton

BOLINGBROKE—Henry of Lancaster, newly crowned King Henry IV

NORTHUMBERLAND—Earl of Northumberland, surnamed Percy

FITZWATER—a lord

PERCY—Northumberland’s son

BOLINGBROKE has just usurped the throne from RICHARD II and imprisoned RICHARD at Pomfret Castle in northern England. BOLINGBROKE is ensconced at Windsor Castle, where, at the close of the previous scene, his supporter EXTON has interpreted BOLINGBROKE’s words “Have I no friend will rid me of this living fear?” as an appeal to murder RICHARD. In Pomfret Castle, RICHARD reflects on his fallen state. A groom enters the prison chambers.

GROOM: Hail, royal prince!

RICHARD: Thanks, noble peer;

The cheapest of us is ten groats too dear.¹

What art thou? and how comest thou hither,

5 Where no man never comes, but that sad dog
That brings me food to make misfortune live?

GROOM: I was a poor groom of thy stable, king,

When thou wert king; who, travelling towards York,

With much ado at length have gotten leave

10 To look upon my sometimes royal master’s face.

O, how it yearn’d my heart when I beheld

In London streets, that coronation-day,

When Bolingbroke rode on roan Barbary,²

Continued

¹royal . . . ten groats too dear—the difference between a “royal” coin and a “noble” coin was ten groats, a groat being a coin worth fourpence. Richard plays on the word “peer” meaning that he, the cheapest, as a prisoner, has become the peer or equal of a groom. For the groom to have called him “royal” is to place him ten groats too high.

²roan Barbary—Richard II was a horseman. It was well-known that Barbary was his favourite horse.

That horse that thou so often has bestrid,
 15 That horse that I so carefully have dress'd!³
RICHARD: Rode he on Barbary? Tell me, gentle friend,
 How went he under him?
GROOM: So proudly as if he disdain'd the ground.
RICHARD: So proud that Bolingbroke was on his back!
 20 That jade hath eat bread from my royal hand;
 This hand hath made him proud with clapping him.
 Would he not stumble? would he not fall down,
 Since pride must have a fall, and break the neck
 Of that proud man that did usurp his back?
 25 Forgiveness, horse! why do I rail on thee,
 Since thou, created to be awed by man,
 Was born to bear? I was not made a horse;
 And yet I bear a burthen like an ass,
 Spurr'd, gall'd, and tired by jauncing Bolingbroke.
 30 *(Enter KEEPER, with a dish.)*
KEEPER: Fellow, give place; here is no longer stay.
RICHARD: If thou love me, 'tis time thou wert away.
GROOM: What my tongue dares not, that my heart shall say. *(Exit.)*
KEEPER: My lord, will't please you to fall to?⁴
 35 **RICHARD:** Taste of it first, as thou art wont to do.
KEEPER: My lord, I dare not: Sir Pierce of Exton, who lately
 came from the king, commands the contrary.
RICHARD: The devil take Henry of Lancaster and thee!
 Patience is stale, and I am weary of it. *(Beats the KEEPER.) . . .*
 40 *(Enter EXTON and SERVANTS, armed.)*
RICHARD: How now! what means death in this rude assault?
 Villain, thy own hand yields thy death's instrument.
(Snatching an axe from a servant and killing him.)
 Go thou, and fill another room in hell.
 45 *(He kills another. Then EXTON strikes him down.)*
 That hand shall burn in never-quenching fire
 That staggers thus my person. Exton, thy fierce hand
 Hath with the king's blood stain'd the king's own land.
 Mount, mount, my soul! thy seat is up on high;
 50 Whilst my gross flesh sinks downward, here to die. *(Dies.)*

Continued

³dress'd—groomed

⁴fall to—begin eating

EXTON: As full of valour as of royal blood:
Both have I spill'd; O would the deed were good!
For now the devil, that told me I did well,
Says that this deed is chronicled in hell.
55 This dead king to the living king I'll bear:
Take hence the rest, and give them burial here. *(Exeunt.)*

SCENE VI: Windsor Castle *(Flourish. Enter BOLINGBROKE, YORK, with other Lords, and Attendants.)*

BOLINGBROKE: Kind uncle York, the latest news we hear
Is that the rebels have consumed with fire
Our town of Cicester in Gloucestershire;
60 But whether they be ta'en or slain we hear not.
(Enter NORTHUMBERLAND.)
Welcome, my lord: what is the news?
NORTHUMBERLAND: First, to thy sacred state wish I all happiness.
The next news is, I have to London sent
75 The heads of Oxford, Salisbury, Blunt, and Kent:
The manner of their taking may appear
At large discoursed in this paper here.
BOLINGBROKE: We thank thee, gentle Percy, for thy pains;
And to thy worth will add right worthy gains.
70 *(Enter FITZWATER.)*
FITZWATER: My lord, I have from Oxford sent to London
The heads of Brocas and Sir Bennet Seely,
Two of the dangerous consorted traitors
That sought at Oxford thy dire overthrow.
75 **BOLINGBROKE:** Thy pains, Fitzwater, shall not be forgot;
Right noble is thy merit, well I wot.
(Enter PERCY, and the BISHOP OF CARLISLE.)
PERCY: The grand conspirator, Abbot of Westminster,
With clog of conscience and sour melancholy
80 Hath yielded up his body to the grave;
But here is Carlisle living, to abide
Thy kingly doom and sentence of his pride.

Continued

BOLINGBROKE: Carlisle, this is your doom:

Choose out some secret place, some reverend room,
85 More than thou hast, and with it joy thy life;
So as thou livest in peace, die free from strife:
For though mine enemy thou hast ever been,
High sparks of honour in thee have I seen.

(Enter EXTON, with persons bearing a coffin.)

90 **EXTON:** Great king, within this coffin I present
Thy buried fear: herein all breathless lies
The mightiest of thy greatest enemies,
Richard of Bordeaux, by me hither brought.

BOLINGBROKE: Exton, I thank thee not; for thou hast wrought
95 A deed of slander, with thy fatal hand,
Upon my head and all this famous land.

EXTON: From your own mouth, my lord, did I this deed.

BOLINGBROKE: They love not poison that do poison need,
Nor do I thee: though I did wish him dead,
100 I hate the murderer, love him murdered.
The guilt of conscience take thou for thy labour,
But neither my good word nor princely favour:
With Cain⁵ go wander through shades of night,
And never show thy head by day nor light.
105 Lords, I protest, my soul is full of woe,
That blood should sprinkle me to make me grow:
Come, mourn with me for that I do lament,
And put on sullen black incontinent:
I'll make a voyage to the Holy Land,
110 To wash this blood off from my guilty hand:
March sadly after; grace my mournings here;
In weeping after this untimely bier.⁶

(Exeunt.)

William Shakespeare

⁵Cain—in the Bible, the eldest son of Adam and Eve, who killed his brother, Abel, and was driven into the wilderness; a murderer

⁶bier—coffin

VII. Questions 62 to 70 in your Questions Booklet are based on this excerpt from a novel.

from THE SCORCHED-WOOD PEOPLE

This fictional account is based on the early history of the province of Manitoba. Louis Riel, visionary Métis leader, has just returned to St. Boniface with the good news that Manitoba will become a province and that the fears of the Métis people will be resolved. He has faith in the word of George-Etienne Cartier, one of the Fathers of Confederation and a member of MacDonald's government. The Dumont brothers, Isidore and Gabriel, are among the listeners.

No one ever saw him [Riel] go through the small East Gate now; below the River Gate three York boats¹ bulged bottoms-up against the gleaming Assiniboine, where others already rocked. The bright air floated with the smell of pitch and pine and oak planking, the sounds of men working. Bales of goods lay
5 stacked at the wharfs. As he turned the corner of the east wall, the whole length of it, boats and canvas and baling burst upon him, our people intent at what they loved, their hands shaping and mending. The June sunlight was a benediction and he paused, almost staggered at how mercifully it had begun to emerge, how the air stood in his nostrils like sharp incense. He could hardly believe himself, that out
10 of his often fumbling insecurity dreamed like a nightmare staggering in the agonies of brain fever, that out of these decisions which sometimes burst with the clarity of an explosion into his rages—there is no other way and the devil do what he will this will happen—this goodness had happened. All of it in this glorious hunting sun, province and peace possible even for the buffalo hunters; he looked
15 at his hand, moved it joint and thumb, fingers. The tight skin stretched: it was real. He saw, felt, smelt it. Real, and he waved suddenly, ecstatic as a child laughing while the working men near him looked up and waved, laughing, but he was signalling to horsemen clustered far below near the ferry on the Red River. Someone there, it looked like Gabriel, waved back and then they all ran, had
20 mounted and were galloping up between the boats and workmen in one deep blue wave, their beautiful horses washing them up against the river and the far roofs and spires of St. Boniface.

“I hope your carts are in shape,” he greeted them. “I’ve got good news.”

The riders cheered to their horses’ rearing and the workmen began to crowd
25 about. To their shouts he was being hoisted up, laughing, the immense rounded curve of a York boat under him; he could feel the ridged planking through his moccasins.

Continued

¹York boats—large canoe-like boats propelled by oars or a square sail; used by the Hudson’s Bay Company on inland waters

“All right, now listen,” he shouted; they were craning up at him, the horsemen above them, all brown faces in the early summer sun. “Ottawa has
30 agreed to everything we said, everything, and we’ll have a—”

The cheers echoed the length of the wall, and around along the two river flats; from everywhere more men came running. He knew the Convention should have heard this first, but he no more wanted to resist these cheering faces than the immense joy in himself.

35 “We’re not just a territory; we’re a province called Manitoba! And we keep our river property, just as it is. We keep our farms and our grazing lots, everything!” The air rang. “And a new governor is coming—a *good* one this time who—”

“Does he speak French?” yelled a voice.

40 “Not like you,” Riel shouted back, “*good* French!”

The young man who remembered this to me a year later could hardly speak then for crying.

“All right!” Riel waved them quiet at last, the brown, hard faces gleaming below him like water in spring. “We have work to do. The Company has to get
45 its goods out; you’re almost ready with the boats. Robert has his windmill turning again as you can see, the grasshoppers may be bad, they could be as bad as last summer so you have to take good care of your cattle, and all you hunters . . .” he gestured to the riders, “you get your people out on the plains for buffalo. Lots of dull police-work, lots of politics but now we need pemmican.”

50 The hunters cheered, were wheeling their nervous horses but several held steady, watching him. Elzéar shouted, “What about the soldiers, we heard they’re coming?”

“That’s a police force, no more guard duty for you. Half the men and all the officers are English regulars. And they won’t be here before the new governor, so
55 get your people and carts together, and let me know when you start. Now, everybody, back to work.”

Through cheers the men scattered. Riel jumped from the boat, the ground so solid under him, but the three horsemen remained: the remaining three—Isidore Dumont had ridden back in spring—“savages” from the Saskatchewan country,
60 looking as wild as if seven months in the settlement had simply settled them in their difference. Riel said to Gabriel, “You have further to ride than anyone,” gesturing to the whooping riders by the river’s glare, but Gabriel’s expression did not soften in the least.

“I don’t like this,” he said.

65 “We have to have food; all the inland trade, everything depends on pemm—”

“I know that, I know.” Gabriel leaned forward; his horse jerked its head against the summer flies. “It’s them eight hundred greenhorns; we could pick

Continued

them off anywhere on the Winnipeg River like—”

Riel gripped his leg. “We’ve just made the biggest country in the world.

70 Without killing anyone!”

“Ontario doesn’t think so.”

“One, necessary, *execution*.² You know how many people were killed, in anger, to make the United States?”

75 “Who cares, now?” Gabriel said very softly, and suddenly he was off his horse, nose to nose with Riel. “Let me tell you something, my fine politician, you’ve made the ‘biggest country in the world’ because of our guns! That’s why every settler and stupid Canadian here and that Ontario guzzler and whoever in England listens to you. This nice little gun right here can pick you off a man at two hundred paces. They know power. And now they’re sending their guns up
80 our lakes and rivers and you’re sending yours away? What’s the matter with you?”

“Listen Gabriel, I know what—”

“I know Red River needs meat, everything inland needs it, but the Saskatchewan winterers had pretty good hunting, I can get you five hundred men
85 for the summer, as good as these; we’ll—”

“No.”

“There’d still be enough on the plains to—”

“No! I don’t want any ‘army’ around here to provoke any other ‘army.’ We must trust them, Cartier . . . show we trust their word. That, that’s the only
90 way . . .”

Riel’s voice trailed off; he broke away from the big hunter glaring so overpoweringly at him. Across the molten river ducks flew north over St. Boniface and the trees lay like soft green froth among the houses.

“That’s the only way different peoples can live together,” he said.

95 “Okay,” Gabriel said finally, though his tone remained unconvinced. “You trust. But I’d rather trust the Indians; I know them.”

“If we’re going to be part of Canada, we have to.”

100 “Well, that’s a thing all right.” Gabriel elaborately rearranged the tangles of his horse’s mane. “You were too far into it when I came, and I’ve kept my mouth shut, all this elections and papers . . .”

“Gabriel,” Riel reached out, both his hands on the wide shoulders, “you have been a great strength to me, a pillar for our people, not only here but in the West. Our people . . . I have not thanked you enough. But I love you for what you’ve done.”

Continued

²One, necessary, *execution*—the execution of the outspoken Canadian surveyor Thomas Scott at a Métis trial. This event greatly increased the tension between the federal government and Riel’s people.

105 “It’s been some fun,” Gabriel grinned suddenly. “Lots of action, sure, though my Madeleine . . .” he shrugged, “we understand each other. If I hadn’t wanted to, I wouldn’t have stayed. They’ve heard about us now; they won’t forget. But . . . why don’t we just go West to all that country, Louis you don’t know how big it is, the Saskatchewan country all the way to the mountains covered with
 110 snow, so high they’re frozen, and beautiful . . . from the Missouri way up into the forests everything open, we lived near Fort Edmonton when I was small and the river valleys, the buffalo herds, my god we could have our own *nation*, by the blood none of this begging Ottawa for a province! You’d be our captain or president or king, whatever you wanted and all that land and water and air—”
 115 “And the Indians dying of smallpox, the Blackfoot and Cree and Sioux killing each other, the buffalo just about—”
 “There’s millions of buffalo out there!”
 “It’s too late,” Riel said. “You’re dreaming too late.”
 Gabriel glared at him an instant; then with an abrupt, violent gesture leaped
 120 onto his horse. He leaned down, his mouth trying to lift into a grin.
 “Five hundred men,” he said. “We’d still have the fall hunt, that’s enough for any good savage.”
 Riel stared at the ground beside his moccasins.
 “Michel and Moïse are staying here,” Gabriel muttered finally. “At least
 125 they’ll give you some warning.”
 Riel looked up quickly; his hand gripped Gabriel’s leg, the finger bent against the long Winchester tied to the saddle.
 “Okay, my good friend, okay. And thank you for . . . staying.” He laughed a little, “We have never had enough time to talk, always this with you sitting on a
 130 horse, ready to gallop off.”
 “I live on horses.”
 “Will you come back this fall? Wouldn’t Madeleine like a winter here?”
 “Maybe. I guess that’ll depend what’s . . . going on here,” Gabriel suddenly clamped his huge hard hand over Riel’s hand, crushing it against his leg and the
 135 round, tight belly of his horse. “God bless you, keep you,” and he wheeled about, was galloping between the workmen towards the river trail, the strength of his emotion ringing in Riel’s numb fingers like a bell of premonition. But neither of them would have believed they would not meet again for fourteen years. Neither would have believed that.

Rudy Wiebe
 Alberta writer

Winner of 1995 Governor General’s Award

Credits

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English 30: Part B

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